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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PREL AORC TBIO WHO FI
SUBJECT: ACTING DAS DISCUSSES POLIO ERADICATION, AVIAN
INFLUENZA AND SMALL POX WITH SENIOR FINNISH OFFICIALS

REF: SECSTATE 71569

¶1. (U) Summary. On May 9, Acting OES S DAS Jack Croddy and Embassy reps met with senior public health officials at the Finnish Foreign Ministry to discuss polio eradication and avian influenza. He encouraged the Finns to continue funding the Polio Eradication Initiative and to take an active role on the issue during their upcoming EU presidency. He also urged the Finns to work closely with Russia to gain their commitment to share avian samples with the WHO and in capacity building at FAO. Emboff also took advantage of the opportunity to deliver the reftel demarche on small pox. End Summary.

¶2. (U) On May 9, Acting S DAS Jack Croddy (who was in Finland leading a delegation to review the bilateral S & T Agreement) met with Anneli Vuorinen, Deputy Director General for Global Issues at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. He encouraged the Finns to continue funding the Polio Eradication Initiative and to take an active role on the issue during their presidency of the EU, beginning on July 11. He touched upon the problems associated with the immunization campaigns and Nigeria and asked that Finland and the EU consider making statements at the World Health Assembly that commend certain countries, but encourage others to do better.

¶3. (U) The Finns responded that there was some donor fatigue amongst donor countries who had been repeatedly given overly optimistic forecasts for the eradication of polio. Given the optimistic reports from the WHO, they noted that they had not considered polio to be on the verge of wide spread proliferation. Nonetheless, they acknowledged the importance of seeing the project through to the end, something they said could be a good success story for WHO. With regard to funding, they pointed out that it is unlikely that Finland will continue to fund specific projects in the future. Instead, they intend to give lump sums to the WHO, which the WHO can then manage and earmark as appropriate. This would presumably free up human resources in Helsinki.

¶4. (SBU) Croddy also discussed avian flu and the IPAPI, thanking Finland for its commitment and its support at the April 11 meeting. He suggested that Finland might work closely with Russia to gain their commitment to share samples with the WHO. He also requested Finnish support for capacity building within FAO. Vuorinen promised to take this into consideration, particularly as they coordinate their positions domestically and with other EU member states in advance of the World Health Assembly.

¶5. (U) Following this discussion, Embassy Econoff raised the talking points of the reftel action request on small pox,

soliciting Finnish support for the continuation of official small pox stocks in the U.S. and Russia, as well as testing with the live virus. Vuorinen responded that while the issue was remotely familiar to her, they had not yet discussed this within their WHA delegation. She promised to do so, and to take our views into consideration.

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